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Illusio[n]text

Richard Allen (after Goat Island)

A. MAGIC TRICK

I am standing in James Fisher's painting studio. He is showing me a sequence of images that depict boats with pictures of Japanese mascots painted on the sails. He wants to know what I think. I think they are funny: 'These are funny paintings,' I say. He seems both delighted and disappointed at my comment, unsure of my tone. Out of the corner of my eye I spot another sequence hung on the back wall, three small linen paintings hung just centimetres apart. A strange effect occurs. The images I am looking at appear to hover in front of their backgrounds; I am looking at three phantom heads vibrating in a row.

B. OKIKU (A GHOST) / 1



C. THE TRACK OF POETRY

There is a phrase by Tadeusz Kantor, which opens the editorial to Performance Research Vol. 1, No. 3: 'illusion shifts reality onto another track, the track of poetry.' The structuring of an illusionistic effect can shift perceptions of reality into the realm of artifice, deception and storytelling. Reality becomes transformed, however briefly, to reveal something beyond the surface of what is seen.

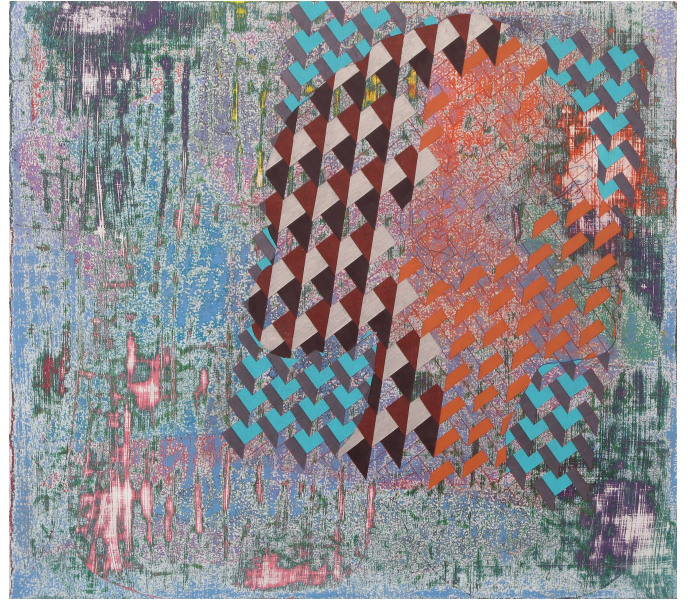
B. LEMADY (A GHOST)/ 1

One midsummer's morn as I were
a-walking
The fields and the meadows were
covered with green,
The birds a-sweetly singing so pleasant
and so charming,
So early in the morning by the break of
the day.

Arise, arise, go pluck your love a posy
of the prettiest flowers that grows in
yonder green.
O yes I'll arise and pluck lilies, pinks
and roses
All for my dearest Lemady, the girl I
adore.

Lemady - Anonymous (traditional).

B. PEGGY BAND (A GHOST)/ 1



B. OKIKU (A GHOST) / 2

Okiku is a figure in the Kabuki play Bancho Sarayashiki. She is a maid working in the mansion of a Japanese Samurai. The Samurai longs after Okiku and tries to seduce her, but when she resists his attempts the Samurai deceives her by hiding a valuable plate and accusing her of stealing, a crime that threatens her standing. To avoid becoming the Samurai's mistress, Okiku throws herself into a well and drowns.

Okiku's ghost stalks the mansion each night, counting from one to nine before expelling blood-curdling howling and sobbing that drives the Samurai insane.

B. LEMADY (A GHOST)/ 2



C. PERFORMANCE

My encounter with these three ghosts is framed by illusion. The geometric tricks that suggest three-dimensional space on a flat plane pull the disembodied heads forward, tricking my eye. The pencil-like outlines of faces sitting behind the cubes quietly disrupt the block-like forms. The illusionistic effects in the paintings are performing the act of framing my encounter with them. The paintings are performing as ghosts—the appearance of something absent and present at the same time—pulling me backwards and forwards in the image while staying perfectly still and silent. Three silent objects hung upon the wall that somehow suggest the sounds of trapped songs.

B. PEGGY BAND (A GHOST)/ 2

Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me to mourn
The miseries of man.

Man Was Made to Mourn —Robert
Burns